



With the Russians waiting out this arms show for their own, in Russia later in the year, the emphasis was not on tanks, although the U.S., the Germans, and the French showed their best. The U.S. M1A2 SEP, above, was there, as was the German Leo IIA6, upper right, and the new French MBT, the Leclerc, at right.



EUROSATORY 2000

Upgrade Packages Dominate French Arms Show

by Major Dave Daigle, Editor-in-Chief

This year's edition of Eurosatory 2000, the French biennial armament exhibition, included little that was new in the way of tanks, probably because the scheduling conflicted with a Russian show a few weeks later at Nizhny Taghil and the Russians saved their surprises for that exhibition.

But tank upgrade packages drew a lot of attention from nations seeking less expensive solutions to their armor needs. The upgrade packages included power plant, fire control, and protection improvements for T-72s, T-55s, and BMPs. The number of companies engaged in producing upgrade packages seems to be growing rapidly, probably a reaction to the high cost of buying new and the reality that these nations already own quantities of older equip-

ment. The used armor business is also flourishing: one sales representative said his firm had recently completed a sale of 100 reconditioned T-55s and were offering a similar upgrade package for the T-72.

Eurosatory takes place at the Le Bourget exhibition site outside Paris, the airfield where Charles Lindbergh landed after his historic crossing of the Atlantic.

The five-day exhibition, held every two years, is a veritable hyper-mart for defense shoppers. This year, arms manufacturers, potential customers, defense trade insiders, and assorted protestors were among the 40,000 who came to the show to see more than 800 exhibits from 39 countries.

The Israelis brought their Merkava III, showing this model for the first time outside Israel. Meanwhile, the follow-up to that model was undergoing testing. According to an IDF spokesman, the Merkava IV will be upgraded with a 1,500-hp MTU diesel and an improved armor package, the latter taking advantage of the Merkava's modular armor suite that was designed to be upgraded as threats changed.

Other major, new-generation tanks on view were the French Leclerc, the German Leopard 2A6, and the newest version of the U.S. M1-series, the M1A2 SEP, now being fielded at Fort Hood by the 4th ID's 67th Armor. The SEP tank incorporates a new-generation forward-looking infrared thermal sights for engagements at longer



One post-Cold War hybrid seen at the show was the Czech VOP-026, above, a BMP-2 chassis with a Bushmaster 30mm turret. The Israelis showed their Merkava MkIII, at right, although a newer model with a 1,500 hp engine was under test in Israel.



Several firms were at the show offering upgrade packages for older tanks, like the T-72 at left.

The recent emphasis on peacekeeping, and the inevitable exposure of soldiers to mines in those situations, has spurred new solutions, although the German Keiler mine-clearing system, above, somewhat resembles the WWII-era "Flail" tanks developed by the British. The weights at the ends of the chains spin around and beat the ground ahead, setting off any mines.

France also showed the recovery version of their new Leclerc MBT, at left.

ranges and also is fitted with improved microprocessors, additional memory to accommodate battle-command software, and digitized color mapping cartridges for use with other Force XXI digital platforms.

A new driver's display linked to the Global Positioning System (GPS) provides navigational information and direction with a "steer-to" feature intended to cue the driver so that he requires fewer directions from the tank commander.

The U.S. pavilion also displayed the newest M2 Bradley, the M56 Coyote smoke generator, the HEMTT (Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck), and the 5-ton truck from the Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles (FMTV). The U.S. delegation included General John N. Abrams, CG Training and Doctrine Command, who spoke on the new interim brigades now being developed at Fort Lewis, Wash. He stressed that the brigades were combined arms units that might have an armor or an infantry officer in command, and that could be

employed in many functions. The concept, he said, was to create a brigade unit capable of operating over 100 miles a day, logistically supported by a strategic "air bridge."

GEN Abrams also touched on the Future Combat System (FCS) and the track-versus-wheel debate, noting that advances in the technology of wheel-based platforms might allow consideration of a wheeled FCS when the decision is made to build this vehicle in the future.